



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20447

DCL 97-12

March 7, 1997

TO ALL STATE IV-D DIRECTORS

Dear Colleague:

The Office of Child Support Enforcement and the Child Care Bureau, both of the Administration for Children and Families, are promoting collaboration between the child support enforcement and child care programs. The child support enforcement and child care programs serve many of the same children and families. These programs play important roles in promoting self-sufficiency for families, especially in light of Federal and State welfare reform initiatives.

Child care costs can be a financial burden, particularly for low-income families. Many families must choose between child care and other basic needs. Other families find themselves constantly shifting child care arrangements and making compromises in the quality of care. To address these problems, subsidized child care services help low-income families and those transitioning off welfare to obtain child care so they can work or attend training or education. A combination of Federal, State and local funds make these services available to eligible parents through certificates or contracted programs. We have enclosed fact sheets which provide more information about the Child Care Bureau and the Child Care and Development Fund.

To date, our child support/child care collaboration efforts have included joint sessions at national conferences and newsletter articles. In addition, representatives from our offices recently met to discuss possible outreach initiatives with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

We know that many of you are already collaborating with your State's child care program. The joint session of State child support enforcement and child care administrators at the recent American Public Welfare Association (APWA) meeting in Phoenix was a good example of existing efforts. We are now asking every child support enforcement program to join these efforts. Below are some specific ideas on ways you may wish to proceed, based on practices many State child support and child care programs already have in place.

1. Outreach/Referral Activities. In addition to providing child care subsidies to low-income families, State child care agencies are also required by Federal law to disseminate to the general public consumer education information that will promote informed child care choices. Many States provide this information through a network of local, community-based resource and referral agencies. Your State's child care consumer education/resource and referral network may be able to provide information to parents about paternity establishment and child support enforcement. Many resource and referral agencies receive a large



portion of their inquiries from parents with infants and therefore can potentially play an important role in encouraging early paternity establishment. In addition, we urge you to establish referral procedures so that child care agencies can refer families to the appropriate child support enforcement office. You may want to provide the child care community with copies of informational materials for distribution as well as a list of phone numbers and addresses for referrals.

2. Policy Development. We also suggest that you collaborate with your State's child care agency on policy issues which affect both the child support and child care programs. For example, you may want to involve the child care community in your State's next review of its guidelines for setting child support awards. Your State child care agency can provide information that will be valuable in examining how your State's child support guidelines deal with child care costs, child care subsidies, and dependent care tax credits. Likewise, you can work with the State child care agency regarding how custodial parents' child support income will be treated in eligibility determinations for child care subsidies.

We urge you to meet with your State child care director to discuss specific activities regarding both outreach/referral and policy development. Enclosed is a list of State child care administrators. In addition, please alert all the local IV-D offices throughout your State about this initiative and their role in it. A local IV-D office can work with the local child care community to set up referral arrangements, distribute outreach materials, and speak with child care staff, providers, and parents about child support services.

As we jointly invite your help to promote collaboration between child support and child care, we want to assure you --as we did the State child care administrators in a similar letter-- of our joint commitment to assist you. Federal regional child support and child care staffs share this commitment. They invite your calls for assistance and are interested in learning about success stories you want to share with us. We are interested in showcasing in the Child Support Report best practices under this initiative.

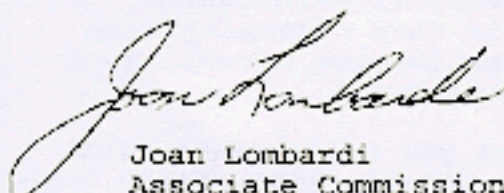
Finally, collaboration between child support and child care, while important, should only be one part of a larger collaboration effort. A similar initiative that child support is undertaking with Head Start has already begun to yield good results. All relevant agencies -- including agencies that administer Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, health programs, and education-- need to work together to ensure a coordinated approach to serving families.



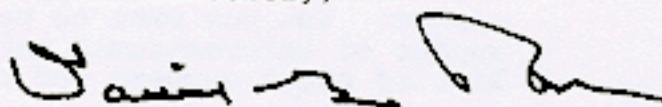
Page 3--State IV-D Directors

In closing, we thank you on behalf of the many parents and their children whose lives will be strengthened through your participation in this initiative.

Sincerely,



Joan Lombardi  
Associate Commissioner  
Child Care Bureau



David Gray Ross  
Deputy Director  
Office of Child Support  
Enforcement

Enclosure

cc: ACF Regional Administrators